



Tallgrass Sierran

November/December 2003 Volume 31 No. 6

THE HEART OF ILLINOIS GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB ♦ P.O. Box 3593, Peoria, IL 61614 ☎ (309) 637-1393

HOI Group Meetings

WED
Nov 19

What is the Zoo Planning to Do?

Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

Glen Oak Zoo Manager Jan Schweitzer will discuss plans for the zoo expansion at Glen Oak Park. A representative from the Peoria Zoological Society will be present and will supply information on what their group does and how to become a member. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*

WED
DEC 17

Annual Potluck & Slides Party

Forest Park Nature Center, 6:30 p.m.

Bring your favorite food to share and a dozen or so slides from your latest trip or event, for a holiday time get-together. The Nature Center will be decked for the season, and this is a great chance to enjoy a relaxing evening during the holiday. Bring some friends! Hot and cold drinks will be provided. You will need your own table service and a good appetite! A projector will be available for showing a sampling of slides after the meeting, and you will see your fellow/friend Sierrans in action!

Wetlands Protection Vote Coming

Please contact your state senators to urge them to support House Bill 422, the Illinois Wetlands Protection bill. A vote will be taken sometime after Nov. 7th, when the Legislature goes back into session. H.B. 422 will provide protections for small and isolated wetlands not protected by other laws. Contact Sen. George Shadid, phone his Pekin office at 309-353-6276 and mail a letter to him at 127 Capitol Bldg., Springfield, IL 62706. Call Sen. Dale Risinger at his office 309-693-4921 and write to him at M103F Capitol Bldg., Springfield, IL 62706.

Where Have All the Flowers Gone?

BY RALPH GINN

The popular sixties song by Peter, Paul and Mary asks some fundamental questions about choices and the leaders who make them. Today, Americans should be asking like-minded questions of its leaders. Is there a plan for long term quality of life? Can we sustain unchecked sprawl, development, and natural resource depletion? Will bacteria and insects be the survivors of the 22nd century? Unconscionably, our nation's political and business leaders appear to be blinded by the headlights of what they call "progress."

Cases in point: The one-sided battles fought daily between human and animal betrays our tolerance, at the first sign of conflict, for space and resources. How often do you read/view that police dispatched a "nuisance animal" because it threatened or attacked a careless or provoking human? How often do you read/view that flora and fauna are threatened by development or pollution? The poignant word to describe our country's psyche is **EXCESS**. For the first time, vehicles (cars, pickups, SUV's) outnumber drivers, 204 million to 191 million. New homes typically range from 4000 to 8000 square feet, cost a half million and more, and often shelter a family of two to four.

So what do our leaders have planned? More of the same it would seem. Congressman Ray LaHood (18th district), always ready to champion his own efforts to aid the Illinois River, has lashed out at The Wetland Initiative's (TWI) efforts to legally circumvent a \$50,000 grant cap by splitting the Hennepin-Hooper conser-

vation project into seven foundations so that each could receive \$48,000. LaHood called it a "perversion of the law," and threatens legislation. He is, seemingly, oblivious of TWI's gigantic achievement in restoring the river backwater, and their efforts to reduce sedimentation from feeder streams like Sandy Creek in Marshall county. Oh, if only LaHood was so indignant over the billions of dollars in lost tax revenues when U.S. corporations set up shell headquarters in Cayman and the Bahamas. Meanwhile, the Illinois Environmental Protection agency (IEPA) is trying to block a new Bush administration rule that will harm air quality by keeping older, higher-polluting plants and factories in use longer without having to upgrade pollution control equipment. Cheers for the IEPA! But..... we can choke on another hairball from Bush, he has ended a 25-year ban on the sale of land polluted with polychlorinated biphenyls (PBC's). PBC's are a probable cause of cancer and liver damage in humans. The ban will make it difficult to track the sale of the PBC sites and hard to ensure that buyers don't spread contamination by development.

Is there any positive leadership? Yes, of course. The Sierra Club, and many other environmental groups continue to work toward sustainable life-styles. Ten major labor unions, including the United Auto Workers, the Steelworkers, and the Mine Workers, have initiated the "Apollo Project." An endeavor that would invest \$300 billion in energy innovation and efficiency. It would include hybrid cars, wind generators, solar cells, and mass transit.

Continued on page 2



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Flowers, from page 1

To right the American ship and get on a course that sails on though the new millennium, the American people must distinguish between leaders of self-interest and leaders with a vision of the long-future. They are failing miserably. In a recent TODAY/CNN/Gallup poll, 1% rate the environment as the most important problem facing the country.

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SIERRA CLUB
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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Army Corps of Engineers Presents River Alternatives Your Support for Environmental Investments Needed

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

As Joe Laszlo, Heart of Illinois Sierra Club Conservation Chair said, "There is nothing tying the lock construction with any of the environmental mitigation plans." In other words, larger locks could be built on the Illinois River at Peoria and one can wonder if environmental investments that the Army Corps presented at a public hearing in Peoria on October 22nd will happen. Your comments are needed by November 12th to urge the Army Corps of Engineers to make the environmental health of the rivers a priority and to fund Option E, the most extensive environmental mitigation program at \$8.4 billion. Any actions regarding barge traffic must be tied to appropriations in the interests of the health of the rivers. Economic scenarios for barge traffic ranged from continued maintenance of the locks as they are, to placing taxes on barge traffic, using switch boats and new moorings for barges waiting to go through locks, to an extensive construction program for doubling the size of the locks. Barge companies, farmers, and labor groups are demanding that the locks be doubled and that construction start as soon as possible.

Your tax dollars support millions in operations and maintenance at locks throughout the Upper Mississippi River System. Studies have shown the barge traffic on the rivers has remained at simi-

lar levels for over a decade, and that shipping of grain has not increased.

Army Corps studies have showed that barge traffic has caused serious degradation to the river systems. Barge propellers kill millions of fish larvae, which weakens the entire food chain of river ecosystems. Barge traffic also adds to other environmental problems. Side channels are being lost and barges accelerate the decline of side channel nurseries and kill marsh plants; floodplain forests are declining; delta wetlands are being lost; the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico is growing; and coastal wetlands of Louisiana are being lost. Locks and dams have stopped the natural regeneration of the river system. Barges add pollution and turbidity to the water, keep water plants from getting rooted, and a host of attending problems. We need to urge that a long-term view of river ecosystems be made and that the optimum protection and investment be made to attempt to address the decline in the Upper Mississippi River system environmental health.

More information and comment forms are located at <http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/> and can be sent to: District Engineer; USAED, Rock Island; ATTN: PM-A (Jackson); Clock Tower Bldg - PO Box 2004; Rock Island, IL 61204-2004.

Illinois PIRG Wants Peoria Press Conference on Coal Power Plant Pollution Problems

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Illinois Public Action Research Group (PIRG) will have a press conference October 28th at the Peoria Public Library regarding air quality concerns. PIRG is raising questions about health issues and coal fired power plants. Governor Blagojevich recently approved a new coal fired power plant in the Chicago area, much to the dismay of environmentalists. Utility companies are exploiting loopholes in air pollution law further weakened by the Bush Administration, and are bypassing modern pollution standards to the detriment of all our health. More information is available at the PIRG website: <http://www.illinoispirg.org>. Conservation Chair Joe Laszlo will be commenting on behalf of Heart of Illinois Sierra Club.



Joe Laszlo, HOI Conservation Chair, talks on the air with WCBU Program Director Nathan Irwin during WCBU's fall membership drive. HOI members volunteered to answer phones on Sunday, October 19th. Photo: Joyce Blumenshine

2003 HOI Excom Election: Rules and Procedures

1. You must be a HOI Sierra Club member to vote.
2. Vote for not more than 3 candidates for a 2004-2005 term to the Heart of Illinois Executive Committee.
3. Joint memberships may use Ballots #1 and #2.
4. Mail ballot(s) to: Joyce Blumenshine
c/o Heart of Illinois Sierra Club
P.O. Box 3593
Peoria, IL 61614
5. Write the name of the voting member(s) on the outside of the envelope containing the ballot.
6. Ballots must arrive at the Sierra Club's mailbox by Nov. 19, or can be delivered to the Group Meeting on Nov. 19.
7. Ballots will be counted at the Group Meeting on Nov. 19.

2003 HOI Sierra Club Excom Election Ballot #1

_____ Rudy Habben
_____ Joseph Laszlo
_____ John Wosik

2003 HOI Sierra Club Excom Election Ballot #2

_____ Rudy Habben
_____ Joseph Laszlo
_____ John Wosik

Ballots Due November 19

Heart of Illinois Executive Committee Election: Candidate Statements

Rudy Habben

I am interested in continuing on the HOI Executive Committee because of my interest in trail development and restoration plans for the Illinois River. The next two years should see the building of trails in Peoria and East Peoria. Restoration work has begun on the Hennepin and Emiquon sites. I have been a Club member since 1970 and, now retired, can represent the Club on local committees such as the Illinois Bluffs Ecosystems project and Tri-County Planning Commission work groups.

Joseph Laszlo

Experience matters. For the past four years I have served as Group Chair (twice), Conservation Chair, Secretary, and group delegate to Chapter. Although I still have much to learn about

running a Sierra Club group, the experience and knowledge I have gained over my 20-year association with our group will prove invaluable as we tackle current and future environmental challenges.

John Wosik

As a member of the Executive Committee, I will continue as newsletter editor and focus my efforts on encouraging our members to participate in Club activities and in educating the public on environmental issues. We need to make all our members feel that it is of value to be a part of our Group, and that their participation is needed and welcome. Whether one's area of interest is conservation, outings, or politics, we all share an enjoyment of nature, and a desire to see it preserved and protected.

Peoria City Council Not Interested in Bettering Recycling or Preserving Lakeview Wilds

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

At the October 21st Peoria City Council meeting, city leadership again approved cutting more trees and adding to the congestion of an already busy main corner, by approving a video store and a Spotted Cow Ice Cream store at the corner of Glen and Sheridan Avenues. No interest or concern was given for drainage issues and the saving of Lakeview Wilds, a mature wooded area. The Council also voted to extend the city garbage contract for six years. While appeals were made to have the Council look into options for more recycling and putting the leaf and yard waste portion of the contract up for bid, only City Council member Gary Sandberg showed any interest. Peoria City Council Member Gail Thetford said that she had not heard from her constituents that they wanted the city to do anything regarding recycling. Ms. Thetford said she knew recycling was the right thing to do, but she voted to support a renewal of the city waste contract that has only the status quo for recycling for Peoria. Many communities around Peoria have curbside, mandatory recycling. Not only is Peoria's handling of garbage and recycling behind the times, we do not have the leadership in the City Council to even be willing to look for better options.

Governor Needs to Release Trail Funding

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Please write to Governor Rod Blagojevich and urge that he release funding in the Open Lands Trust designated for Illinois park districts' trail construction. Local park districts were depending on trail funding, which was previously approved by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Governor Blagojevich froze this funding which is causing problems. Some park districts are facing financial concerns, as funds were already expended for designated projects. Send a copy of your letter to your local representative and senator. Write to the Governor at: Office of the Governor, 207 State House, Springfield, IL 62706. Send copies to Rep. Ricca Slone, Illinois House of Representatives, Springfield, IL 62706; and Senator George Shadid, Illinois Senate; Springfield, IL 62706.

January 2004

